

# DARKEST RUSSIA

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## CHAPTER XII—Continued.

Katherine, her head erect and with her haughty air, walked up to her husband. "Constantine, I should have been born an empress. I was born to command! Ay," and her face assumed even a prouder look, "I should have been the great Katherine herself, for even she would never have ruled Russia with a rod of iron as I would."

Karsicheff said nothing; he probably agreed with her.

"Has Olga returned yet?" he presently asked.

"No; she will come with the Baroness von Rhineberg." Then after a moment's thought, "Olga is heartless anyhow," she added. "She prefers the society of the baroness to mine, and was overjoyed when I gave her permission to drive home with the baroness last night from the Nazimoffs'."

Even as she spoke the great bell sounded outside, and a moment later the voice of the Baroness von Rhineberg was heard in the hall leading to the residence part of the mansion.

"Oh, certainly, you along must come. I am always at home made welcome here." It was the baroness who spoke, and almost immediately after she entered the room, accompanied by General Cobb.

Both Karsicheff and the countess could not conceal their annoyance. The baroness appeared not to notice it—Cobb could not help observing it.

"Ah, we are here—here we are," gushingly exclaimed the baroness, approaching Katherine, "I am so early call, is it so not? And my friend, ze good General Cobb, who the life save of our dear Alexis."

Katherine bowed frigidly. "You are welcome," she said, with marked emphasis on the pronoun.

The baroness interrupted her. "You see, see you," she said, turning gayly to Cobb, "you see you are welcome, is it not. I tell General Cobb he come with me must since he have great good friend in ze Countess Karsicheff, after he have saved Olga's husband that to be some time soon is."

Cobb bowed and smiled slightly.

The signal bell sounded in the official anteroom.

Katherine was now doubly annoyed. Karsicheff was himself furious. He



"FACE TO FACE WITH THE  
THE COUNTESS KARSICHEFF"

had disliked the American from the first. "You will pardon me," he said, "but this is my private office, and," he added, as the bell rang again, "pressing business demands my attention."

Katherine caught his eye, and her look conveyed a meaning. It would not do to openly insult the baroness. Olga had reason for great expectations in that quarter, and it was well

understood that the baroness' wedding gift to her young friend would be something magnificent.

Karsicheff understood. "Come," he said, with an effort to appear pleasant, "and let me show you the painting I spoke of last night. I am sure General Cobb will enjoy it," and he made a step toward the door.

"I shall be delighted," said Cobb.

"And I shall be too delighted too," added the baroness, laying her hand on the American's arm.

"Olga will rejoin you after she has laid off her wraps," said the countess. "I am glad," she added with a sneer, which for the life of her she could not help uttering, "that you had room for her in your carriage."

The baroness was pale as she left the room in company with Cobb, preceded by Karsicheff. "Olga," she thought, "not at home. What did it mean? What could it mean?" She dared not question the countess, whose remark indicated that she supposed that Olga had returned just then with the baroness. The baroness supposed that Olga, who had left the house when she went to inquire for her, had been at her parents' home long before.

As her husband and the visitors left the room, Katherine touched the call-bell.

Radaloff entered.

"Well?"

"Madame, I have obeyed your instructions—"

"Is the girl here?" peremptorily interrupted the countess.

"Yes, madame, but pardon me, I—"

"That will do. Bring her here."

"Pardon, madame, but let me say—"

"No more! You have obeyed your orders, that is enough. You should know your place better than to attempt to hold conversation with the wife of the minister of police. Bring the girl here." And with a haughty wave of her hand the countess turned her back and brought the interview to a close.

Radaloff gazed at her a moment. A sinister smile appeared for a second on his face, and then with the slightest shrug of his shoulders he turned and left the room.

A moment later the door opened and Ilda Barosky entered the room and found herself face to face with the Countess Karsicheff.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Sentenced to Siberia.

When the startling command: "Surrender, traitors, in the name of the Czar!" fell upon the ears of the inmates of the Nihilist rendezvous, it was as a death knell, and had the surprise been less instantaneous than it was, the conspirators would have made a desperate resistance. For they well knew, that captured as they were, red-handed with all the evidence of their guilt, that their doom was sealed, and that from that moment their days—perhaps even their very hours—were numbered.

It was too late to attempt escape by the unseen doors that formed part of the apparently solid walls, for a dozen rifles covered them, and the soldiers, with fingers on the triggers, were only waiting the order to fire. So the prisoners—some in defiance, some in sullen resignation, some in hopeless despair, stood still; while in obedience to the command of the officer, half a dozen soldiers speedily descended and with drawn revolvers pointed at the heads of the conspirators ordered them to throw up their hands. Five minutes later, the captured, men and women alike, were in irons, and were seated in silence waiting the arrival of the prison vans to bear them away.

Under the direction of the officers, a search was then made of the premises. The bombs, the wires, and the battery left no doubt as to the pur-

pose of the prisoners; nor was there wanting still further proof of their guilt. For Kirshkin, weak from loss of blood, and paralyzed by terror, crawled on his knees to the officer and begging for his life offered to betray his companions. Without committing himself to promise anything, the officer induced Kirshkin to proceed, and the fear-stricken wretch revealed the hidden chambers on the other side of the wall. Here were found papers revealing the ramifications of the conspiracy and implicating thousands of Nihilists throughout the empire.

Among all the prisoners there were none who felt their fearful position more than did Ivan and Alexis, Olga and Ilda. With blanched faces they looked into each other's eyes, only to receive in return a sigh of hopeless despair. Alexis, at the first mo-



ment, had drawn the hood of his greatcoat over his head, and Olga had similarly concealed her features with the cape of her mantle. But these precautions were needless at the time, for when roughly ordered to show their faces neither of them were recognized by the officer or by any of his men. They judged by Alexis' uniform, and by the rich and elegant dress of Olga, that their prisoners were persons of no mean station; but, since it was known that Nihilists were to be found in all ranks of society, the only feeling of the soldiers was one of gratification that they had evidently caught some great fish in the net destined for small fry. Their reward, they felt sure, would be all the greater.

In a few hurried words Ivan begged Olga, who was almost fainting, to keep up her courage; that some means would be found to effect her release; but his words produced little comfort to the stricken girl, who, with her hands clasped in unspeakable anguish, sat gazing at her husband with a look of hopeless despair. It was not of herself that Olga thought. Ivan's fate; her father's grief; her mother's deadly anger; the blow to the prospects of Nicholas—all these, as the result of her arrest, flashed in turn through her distracted mind.

Alexis sat, his hands clasped in those of Ilda, a prey to the most conflicting emotions. He realized at once that no explanation, however true, could save him from the fate which he felt certain awaited him. Degradation from his high rank, social ostracism, exile, perhaps death itself—all these he felt were the inevitable result of his capture at such a time and in such a place. For Alexis had been one of the first to be searched and in the breast of his coat had been found Ivan's cigar case with the Red Rouble therein! He felt that this one fact had sealed his fate, and with such fortitude as he could command he resigned himself to the inevitable, and awaited the next move of the soldiers.

The vans arrived at length, and under the escort of three troops of Cossacks, the prisoners having been bundled in, the march began to the great prison of Petropavloak.

Ivan and Olga, Alexis and Ilda,

ironed to each other, were evidently the grand prize in the eyes of the soldiers and police, for the van in which they were ordered to take their place had one entire troop as an escort. Following came the other vehicles laden with prisoners, and last of the procession came all the paraphernalia of the Nihilist headquarters, the printing press being a conspicuous object.

About half the distance to the prison had been traversed when an officer of the secret police galloped up to the procession and, presenting a paper to the officer commanding the detachment with the prisoners, called a halt, and announcing his authority, demanded one of the prisoners—"a girl," the paper said, "bearing the name of Ilda Barosky."

"I have no orders to give this girl out of my custody," said the commander of the escort.

"But," said the other—our friend Radaloff—"my orders are imperative. This girl is to be taken at once to the residence of the minister of police!"

"She is ironed to one of her companions," said the officer, "and I cannot release her here. See," he said, "a halt is dangerous. An outbreak may occur at any moment."

"Deploy your column and report with your prisoners all to the minister of police," said another messenger, riding up to the commander and saluting as he presented a paper.

"That settles our difficulty," said the officer, turning to Radaloff; and he gave orders to change the direction of march. Half an hour later the prisoners with their escort had entered the courtyard of the official residence of the minister of police, and Ilda Barosky was ordered to step down alone. A sergeant of police unlocked her irons and she descended the steps, to be received by Radaloff and taken into his private office.

Radaloff looked curiously at the young girl. He had not forgotten his interview with her brother. "You are Ilda Barosky?" he said.

"I am."

"This is then addressed to you." So saying, Radaloff handed a letter to Ilda, and stood watching her intently as she broke the seal.

Ilda started with amazement. The letter she held in her hand announced that her presence was desired at the office of the minister of police, where the case of her father, the exile Michael Barosky, was being considered with a view to his pardon. It added that her father even then was at the residence of the minister, and awaited the arrival of his daughter! And the letter was on official paper, sealed with the official seal, and bore the signature: "Constantine Karsicheff, minister of police."

Clasping the letter first to her heart and then pressing it passionately to her lips, Ilda's eyes filled with tears. "It is true—it is true, and I shall see my dear, dear father again. Oh, what joy, what happiness even for a moment in this dreadful hour of our wretchedness and despair!"

(To be continued.)

### Wanted Roller Skates in Heaven.

Caroline is five and Eleanor is three and ordinarily they are as light-hearted as two little butterflies, but once in a while they indulge in a serious view of life. It was while she was in one of these graver moods that Caroline looked up the the other day and said: "Mama, I don't want to die; I can't bear the idea of being put down in a big hole in the ground." Her mother, very much startled at the outburst, answered: "Why, Caroline, I don't know that I have ever seen you looking so well, and I hope you are not going to die; but just remember this—it is not the you that is put in the earth; the you goes up to heaven."

"How does the you get there?" asked the practical Eleanor.

"I think that an angel comes and takes it."

"Well," said Eleanor, "when the angel comes for me, I hope he takes me out the front hall so I can grab up my roller skates on the way."—Exchange.